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The Soviet war on religion

[Leicester]

[1930]

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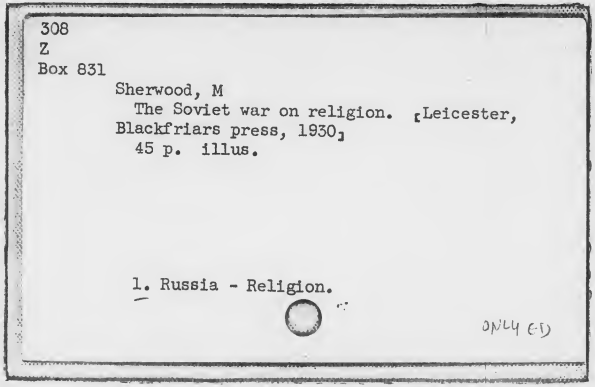
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THE SOVIET WAR ON RELIGION

By

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THE SOVIET WAR ON RELIGION

1. The Crusade Against the U.S.S.R.

December, 1929, saw the beginning of a great campaign against the Soviet Uinon under the watchword of "The defence of religion," supposed to be persecuted by the Bolsheviks. Conservative M.P.'s in the British House of Commons began firing off question after question to the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Henderson, asking what steps he intends to take against the Bolshevik "persecution of religion." The Conservative M.P.'s were supported by numerous representatives of the clergy. A protest committee set up by the Conservatives called a number of public anti-Soviet meetings throughout the country, at which resolutions of protest against the "persecutions" were passed. There was a touching agreement of all denominations in this campaign—Church of England, Roman Catholic, Nonconformist, Jewish and others. The campaign was immediately endorsed by the Russian "white" emigrants, Kerensky and Miliukov, the Russian "white" archbishops (*e.g.* Antonius Krapovitsky) and many others. The capitalist press welcomed the anti-soviet campaign; the *Morning Post* and numerous other papers filled their pages with columns of inventions about anti-religious "horrors," in order to excite the indignation of their readers and inspire them with hatred of the Soviet Republic—the first country in the world where "the workers are the ruling class" (General Council T.U.C. Report, 1924).

The campaign speedily found an echo amongst the reactionary elements in every country. The first public attack on the Soviet Union by a high church dignitary came from the head of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Pius XI. As is well known, the pope in 1929 signed an agreement with the fascist government of Mussolini, which crushed and drowned the Italian working class movement in blood. The pope has not "noticed" how 20 million unemployed in the capitalist countries are dying of hunger. But he is quick to notice the mythical "persecutions" of religion in the U.S.S.R. and has publicly appealed for a crusade against the workers' republic. It is not difficult to guess on whose behalf the pope is working.

The anti-soviet campaign was taken up in Germany, Sweden, Norway, Roumania, Holland, Greece, France, the U.S.A., Czecho-Slovakia, Poland and many other countries.

In Bessarabia (Roumania) the clergy organised a number of protest meetings against "religious persecution" in Soviet Russia, in February, 1930. During the very days when this anti-soviet campaign was being developed, the very same clergy, led by the Metropolitan, Guria, and the students of the theological college at Kishinev, organised a number of Jewish pogroms. Tears and protests against alleged persecution of religion in the U.S.S.R., massacres of Jews at home! The most remarkable thing is that not a single one of these who in England, France, Germany and other countries are raising the howl about "religious persecution" has found time for a word of protest against the real oppression of nationalities and religious persecution which are going on at this very moment in Roumania—and not only in Roumania!

This alone is sufficient to show that the propaganda of a "crusade for civilisation" against the Soviet Union has nothing to do with the defence of religion, but pursues some other ulterior motive.

2. The Soviet Laws on Freedom of Conscience.

On January 23, 1918, the soviet government issued its first decree on the separation of church and state, and church and school. The following are the main points of this decree:

"1. The church is separated from the state.

"2. No local laws or regulations may be issued, throughout the territory of the republic, which limit or hinder freedom of conscience, or grant any privileges or advantages on account of adherence to a religious creed.

"3. Every citizen is at liberty to practise any religion or none at all. All penalties attaching to the practice of any creed whatsoever, or to the non-practising of any creed, are abolished . . .

"5. Freedom to carry out religious ceremonies is guaranteed, to the extent that they do not infringe public order and do not involve any infringement of the rights of citizens."

These four clauses show quite definitely that, in separating church and state, the soviet government establishes com-

plete freedom of conscience, and incidentally full freedom for believers to practise their religion. The decree prohibits any regulations limiting freedom of conscience. There is not a single capitalist state in which this real liberty exists. At the time of writing, the British House of Commons is hotly discussing the 200-year-old blasphemy laws, under which prosecutions may and do still take place for anti-Christian propaganda. The conservative newspapers frequently print indignant protests from religious organisations against the proposal to repeal the blasphemy laws—the very organisations which are equally fervent in their protests against "religious persecution in Russia." Amongst the numerous similar laws in other countries may be mentioned the persecution of Darwinism in the United States, the prosecutions of atheists in a number of European countries in recent years—all under the flag of "punishing blasphemy." Do not all these facts mean the infringement of liberty of conscience? Why do all those who protest against alleged religious persecutions in the U.S.S.R. keep silent in face of the fact that the legislation of a number of countries contains laws against atheism, *i.e.*, against freedom of conscience?

How is it that there is no protest against the fact that in a number of countries, and Great Britain in particular, the people are forced by means of tithes or similar taxes to maintain a church in which millions of them do not believe, are forced to send their children to church schools with which they do not agree? The soviet laws and the soviet government alone ensure complete freedom of conscience by abolishing inequalities of this kind, and by granting full freedom to believe in any god you please, or in none at all.

Clause 4 of the soviet Constitution says "In order to guarantee the workers real liberty of conscience, the church is separated from the state, the school from the church, while freedom of religious belief and anti-religious propaganda is guaranted to every citizen." Under Tsardom, the orthodox church in Russia enjoyed overwhelming privileges, other churches were barely tolerated, atheists were persecuted. Much the same position prevails up to the present day in a number of capitalist countries. The soviet government has changed all this. In Tsarist Russia all non-conformists and dissenters who broke away from the orthodox church, not even to become atheists but to practise a different form of religion, suffered the most rigorous persecution, including

exile to Siberia. Masses of these "heretics" used to emigrate to Turkey and Canada. The soviet government, for the first time, made it possible for millions of dissenters to practise their religion in peace and quiet.

The soviet laws of liberty of conscience go so far that all those whose faith prohibits the use of arms are set free from compulsory military service, and given labour service instead. Is this "persecution"? In capitalist Britain only a very limited number of conscientious objectors succeeded in obtaining this concession during the "great" war; and even these were not immune from other forms of victimisation. Many of the hypocrites who are now trumpeting about religious persecution in Russia helped by their outcry to maintain the disabilities of conscientious objectors (exclusion from the civil service) for years after the war. During the civil war in Russia, when the whole capitalist world was giving active support to the Russian counter-revolutionary forces, the atheist Soviet Republic released thousands of young men from military service on account of their religious beliefs. Numerous deserters and cowards joined the sects whose members were released from military service (Baptists, Evangelicals, Dukhobors, etc.), in order to escape service in the Red Army. This was all the more possible because representatives of the various religious bodies served as experts before the special courts which dealt with claims for exemption on religious grounds, and did their best to secure exemption for everyone claiming adherence to their religion. And this went on at the very time that members of the same churches (*e.g.*, Baptists and Evangelicals) were actively engaged in the organisation of intervention in the Soviet Union by the armies of America and other countries.

Exemption from service in the Red Army on religious grounds prevails to this day: and this in spite of the statement made by one of the leaders of the Russian baptists, at their twenty-sixth Congress: "Very many unregenerate persons have entered into our fold in recent years, attracted only by the report that baptists were set free from military service" (Minutes of the twenty-sixth Baptist Congress, published by the Baptist Federation of the U.S.S.R., 1927, p. 105). Although the Baptist Congress (December 14-18, 1926) declared in favour of compulsory military service of baptists in the Red Army, there are still many cases when people secure exemption on religious grounds by declaring

themselves baptists. This, too, in spite of the fact that thousands of baptists serve in the capitalist armies. Is this religious persecution?

To take another example: the Mennonites are also exempted from military service on religious grounds, in spite of the fact that in 1920, in the Crimea, they took an active part in the "white" General Wrangel's war against the soviet government.

It is in the capitalist countries that religious persecution must be sought—for example, Poland, where the Tsarist laws regarding the Jews are maintained up to this very day (including the establishment of a strictly limited percentage of Jewish students in the universities) and where non-catholics are placed in a position of disadvantage before the law. Why has there been no protest in America or Europe against the fact that the orthodox cathedral in Warsaw was blown up at the demand of the Roman Catholic church, while during 1929 alone over 500 orthodox churches were transformed into catholic chapels? This fact was mentioned by the head of the orthodox church, Metropolitan Sergius, in an interview with foreign press correspondents in Moscow, February 18th, 1930. Why is there no outcry when the Canadian Government (a dominion of the "free" British empire) carries on the most savage persecution of the Russian Dukhobors, arresting and beating children, women and old men? Those who are screaming about religious persecution in the U.S.S.R. see none of these things, because they do not wish to see them—not merely because they are responsible for real persecution in their own countries, and for the maintenance of religious strife in the colonies, such as India, Arabia and Palestine; but because their real object has nothing to do with religion. Their real object is to stir up hatred against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, by whatever means and at whatever cost.

All the stories about the churches in the U.S.S.R. being closed by the government are lies. All the stories of savage persecution of the faithful are lies. All the stories of atrocities committed against the clergy are lies. All the stories of persecution for religious belief are shameless lies—not the ordinary lies of petty swindlers and tricksters, but organised lies, calculated to arouse the masses in every country against the republic which is ruled by the workers and peasants for the first time in history.

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3. When Are Priests Punished in Soviet Russia?

On February 15th, 1930, the leaders of the orthodox church in the Soviet Union had the following question put to them by a number of journalists "Is it true that priests and their followers are subjected to penalties for their religious beliefs, arrested, expelled, etc.?" The reply of the churchman, which was printed in all the Russian papers and circulated to the principal newspapers of Great Britain (who took good care not to print the statement) declares: "Penalties inflicted by the soviet government on clergymen or religious believers are due, not at all to their religious beliefs, but to various criminal activities, just as in the case of other citizens. We have to state frankly that the misfortune of the church is that in the past, as everyone knows perfectly well, it was too closely connected with the monarchical system. Hence the leaders of the church did not realise in time the full meaning of the great revolution, and for a long time behaved as open enemies of the soviet government, supporting Kolchak, Denikin, etc. The best minds of the church, as for example, Patriarch Tikhon, realised this in the end, and tried to put matters right by advising their supporters not to go against the will of the people, and to be loyal to the soviet government. Unfortunately, even up to this day, some of our brothers cannot understand that there will be no return to the past, and continue to act as political opponents of the soviet state."

Two points arise very clearly from this statement of the churchmen. (1) When individual priests or members of a church are prosecuted in the U.S.S.R., this is done, not on account of religious beliefs, but only in the event of counter-revolutionary activity. (2) The latter is not only a thing of the past, but continues to the present day, and many of the leaders of the church have not given up all hope of the restoration of Tsardom.

At the twenty-sixth Congress of the baptists in 1926, following a report on "Relations with the State and Attitude Towards Military Service," a resolution was passed containing the following passage (clause 2): "The Soviet Government has granted complete freedom of conscience in its legislation, and guaranteed the free observance of the obligations of our Christian faith."

We may ask Dr. Rushbrooke, one of the leaders of the

World Baptist Union, who is prominent in the present anti-soviet campaign: "Is this persecution, Dr. Rushbrooke?"

On August 18th, 1927, the Buddhist clergy of the Buriat-Mongol Soviet Republic issued a statement on the position of Buddhism in the U.S.S.R., containing the following: "No one is ignorant of what persecutions and restrictions our revered Buddhist religion suffered under the Tsarist régime . . At the present time the state of affairs is quite different. From the day that the soviet government was established, we have enjoyed full liberty: *yet there are still lamas who hourly yearn after the old vicious order.*"

Let facts speak for themselves.

At the end of October, 1929, it was discovered that a small religious sect in the Northern Caucasus, calling themselves "Imyaslavtsi," were in reality a counter-revolutionary organisation active for a number of years past. The organisers of the sect were Paul Gregorovitch, a former staff officer of the imperial army, and later of the white army; Yakovlev, a former lieutenant of the imperial army; and Butenko, formerly a lieutenant of the imperial gendarmes. These individuals definitely made up their mind to organise an anti-soviet body under the cover of religion. Yakovlev became a prior, Gregorovitch became "Father Theodor." They settled at the Cossack village of Belorechenskaya, and gathered around themselves the fragments of the various white armies remaining in the Northern Caucasus,—former imperial officers and officials, gendarmes, priests and monks. Many of them, as commanders of white troops during the civil war, had shot hundreds of workers, peasants and Red soldiers who fell into their hands. Peter Gregorovitch (the brother of the leader) was a former colonel under the Tsar, Golovan was a member of the band of General Kozlov, who during the civil war specialised in hanging workers and peasants suspected of sympathising with the bolsheviks, etc. Suffice it to say that sixty-two of the leaders of the "Imyaslavtsi" had held commissions as officers in the white armies during the civil war.

It is characteristic that these people selected a religious organisation as the most convenient and safe disguise for their counter-revolutionary activities in recent years. Under the guise of preachers, they freely travelled from village to village, delivering anti-soviet sermons and reading anti-soviet leaflets. Those who entered their organisation had to swear that they would fight the soviet government; would not serve

in the Red Army; would not take up any posts in soviet offices or enter the co-operative societies; would not send their children to soviet schools, but would agitate against them; would not read the soviet papers or pay soviet taxes; and would do all possible to overthrow the soviet government and re-establish the monarchy. They said that the end of the soviet government was near, that white and foreign troops were soon coming from abroad to put an end to the soviet republic. The sect was not very large, and the peasants themselves finally reported the counter-revolutionary nature of its programme to the soviet government.

It stands to reason that some of the *leaders* of this "sect" paid a heavy penalty. But will anyone dare to say that they suffered on account of their "religious convictions"?

It should be added that the most outrageous vice prevailed in the ranks of the Imyaslavtsi. The leaders of the sect forbade the rank and file to marry. This led to many cases of unnatural vice too revolting to be mentioned. At the same time the leaders compelled women members of the sect to live with them.

We have dealt in detail with this organisation because it is a typical example of how religion is utilised by the counter-revolutionaries to fight the soviet government.

To take another example. In November, 1929, there took place at Voronezh the trial of the leaders of the "Feodorovtsi," another religious sect. These, too, were former gendarmes, white guards, etc. The following were the leaders: Parkhomenko, a former white guard, who fought in the civil war against the Red Army, and a rich peasant; Doroshenko, a rich peasant who participated in an anti-soviet rising in 1920; Atorkin, formerly a large landowner, and an ex-bandit; Tushchenko, a former landowner and gendarme. The remainder were of the same type. The sect also called themselves "crusaders"; they preached that the soviet government was the rule of Antichrist, and that God would soon send His white army to put an end to the soviets. Freely quoting from the Bible, they carried on a systematic propaganda against every measure of the soviet government — against collective farms, against tractors, against the co-operatives, against the schools, against taxes, etc. When the leaders of the sect were arrested, there was found in their possession a banner with the inscription: "God save the Tsar." The Feodorovtsi used to set fire to the farms of

peasants who would not join their ranks. In order to play on religious fanaticism, they announced that their leader Parkhomenko was a "saint," and used to arrange for "God's angel" to be seen leaving his hut, etc.

This sect was nothing but a monarchist counter-revolutionary organisation, working under cover of religion. Again, it is scarcely surprising that its leaders paid the penalty. It is worth noting that Sibirko, one of the leaders, admitted in court that they had received money from America to the extent of $62,000. They were tried, not for their "religious beliefs," but for their counter-revolutionary activity.

At the beginning of October, 1929, in the village of Anfalovo (Moscow region) an agricultural labourer, Trofimov, was killed, and Zaitsev, the chairman of the village soviet of Asteshovo, with another member of the soviet, Sokolov, were wounded. All three were active social workers and very popular amongst the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. They were the object of the hatred of the rich peasants and particularly of the priest, Riabov, well known as an irreconcilable opponent of the soviet government. On November 9th (a local church holiday), Riabov made a vicious speech in the cottage of a peasant, Parfenov, attacking the soviet government and the local officials particularly. Influenced by this propaganda, Parfenov the same day killed one and severely wounded two of the local active workers. The court established that Riabov had systematically carried on a propaganda against all the laws and regulations of the soviet government.

In the village of Bidenga (Buinsky county of the Tartar Republic) the local mullah (priest) was Yagafarov. He carried on a systematic campaign against the soviet government, based on frequent quotations from the Koran. He succeeded in creating such hostility to the public organisations of the district that, at his instigation, a group of hooligans wrecked the village reading room and smeared all the tables, placards, books and magazines with filth. Yagafarov, as the principal instigator of this piece of hooliganism, received three years' hard labour. Will anyone say that he suffered for his "religious convictions"?

In September, 1929, at the village of Rykovo (Donetz coalfield), there was a trial of a group of churchmen who on June 27th had attacked a workers' demonstration. The

leader was a former monk, Krasnobayev, who led a band of monks in an attack on the demonstration with the shout of: "Kill the short-haired women; kill the Communists!" Naturally, the soviet court could not deal mildly with such people, even though they were monks. It is in America, Germany, France, Italy and other countries that the court acquits police and other bandits who attack workers' demonstrations, strike pickets and innocent bystanders (as during the textile strike at Gastonia, U.S.A., in 1929). The courts in the Workers' Republic do not pardon such offences.

At the end of 1929, a counter-revolutionary monarchist organisation was discovered at Vyatka. It was headed by the local bishop, Ostrovitinov, and the priests Glushkov and Popinvanov. Among the members of this monarchist group were the brothers Kirsanov, large capitalists before the revolution, a former merchant Sharamov, former Tsarist officers, etc. The leading part was played by Michael Glushkov, whose biography was very interesting. During the war he was an officer in the 14th Lithuanian Regiment of the imperial army. After the revolution he became a monk, but give this up a few years later for the more profitable occupation of a merchant. When this ceased to be of advantage, Glushkov became a priest, and together with some kindred spirits set up a monarchist organisation associated with the Church of the Assumption at Vyatka. Their watchword was: "The soviet government is the power of Antichrist, and therefore should not be obeyed." They drove home this campaign in sermons from the pulpit and in personal conversation. With the help of a group of nuns, they carried on counter-revolutionary agitation in the villages. Their propaganda was not only against the economic and political undertakings of the soviet government, but even against such things as vaccination. One of the active members of this monarchist group, the priestess Fevronia, spread the news far and wide through the villages that "vaccination is the seal of Antichrist."

At the village of Logovitchy (Lodzinopolsk district, Leningrad region) a strong anti-soviet group was organised by the priest Romanov out of his congregation, and carried on systematic anti-soviet propaganda in the village. When a radio was put up in the village in September, 1929, the faithful were called during the church service to destroy this "invention of the devil" and, under the influence of this

agitation and at the instigation of the priest, the wireless mast was torn down.

This is but a very small part of the anti-soviet and counter-revolutionary activities of the churchmen. Only some of those revealed during the second half of 1929 have been quoted. When we take all the years of the revolution, their extent may be imagined. It should be mentioned that priests of other religious bodies were also involved in anti-soviet activity, catholic priests and Jewish rabbis being no less prominent than the orthodox clergy.

It is in such cases that priests and clergymen are prosecuted and punished. Not for religious beliefs, not for functioning as a priest, but for counter-revolutionary activity; just as an atheist is prosecuted if he is involved in similar offences.

Naturally, when caught red-handed in such cases, these people find it to their advantage to pose as "martyrs for the faith," in order to win the sympathy of the man in the street. But who will fail to understand that this is a mere trick? Who will call *this* religious persecution? Only enemies of the soviet government, out to achieve a definite political object.

4. Agents of the Polish General Staff.

In January, 1928, a group of Roman Catholic priests in Podolia published a letter declaring that the catholic church in the U.S.S.R., particularly in the Ukraine, is an agency of the Polish general staff, whom the priests assist by supplying information to its Intelligence Department. These priests wrote: "We were more than once guilty of yielding to the temptation of political activity, frequently establishing relations with the agents of the Polish bourgeoisie and the Polish capitalist state . . . Part of the priesthood carried on an intolerable anti-soviet course of activity, assisting espionage, helping to smuggle people over the frontier into Poland, carrying on anti-soviet agitation, etc."

In February, 1929, a prominent representative of the catholic priesthood, Nicholas Tolstoy (formerly apostolic missionary, Protopresbyter of Jerusalem, etc.), published a letter in the Ukrainian press condemning the anti-soviet activity of the catholic priesthood in the Ukraine. He emphasised that the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S.S.R. is an agency of the Polish general staff. "By engaging in

politics the Roman Catholic priesthood, particularly the Polish priesthood, acts as propagandist for Polish imperialism and its annexationist ambitions in the East. The Catholic priesthood of Polish nationality, during the last ten or twelve years, has been supporting in every possible way the aggressive aims of Poland in the Ukraine, and carrying on propaganda in this direction amongst the catholics irrespective of nationality. . . This goes on in full touch with Poland and with the blessing of the Vatican."

There are facts enough to show that these charges against the catholic priesthood of being agents and spies of Poland are not groundless. In August, 1926, there was a trial of Polish priests at Korosten (Ukraine) on the charge of being agents of the Polish intelligence department, who smuggled spies into Poland. The principal accused, the priest Zhilinsky, had been carrying on espionage in favour of Poland since 1920. Another priest, Loveiko, had crossed the Soviet-Polish frontier with the help of the first section of the Polish general staff. Zhilinsky admitted in court that priests were sent from Poland to U.S.S.R., not merely to carry out religious duties, but first and foremost to engage in political activity amongst the population of Polish nationality in the U.S.S.R., to maintain their sympathies for Poland and imbue them with hatred for the Soviet Union.

Almost exactly a year later, the district court at the city of Kharkov tried the case of the Polish spy, Vishnevskaya. Vishnevskaya was a catholic. In 1921 she entered the service of the Polish intelligence department on the advice of Kusminsky, a priest of Rovno. She frequently crossed the Soviet-Polish frontier to carry on espionage on behalf of the Polish general staff in soviet territory. She was assisted in her work by priests both in Poland and in the soviet Ukraine. Thus, when crossing the soviet frontier on one occasion, she visited Styslo, a priest in Volhynia, to whom she had a letter from Poland, and informed him why she had crossed the border. In the territory of the Ukraine, Vishnevskaya carried on anti-soviet agitation as well as espionage.

The trial of bishop Skalsky, one of the leaders of the catholic church in the Ukraine, which took place in Moscow in February, 1928, again confirmed the existence of this work of espionage on the part of a section of the catholic priesthood. Acting on the instructions of the Polish diplomatic mission in the U.S.S.R., Skalsky carried on espionage of

all kinds. In 1923, he participated in the setting up of counter-revolutionary organisations on the territory of the Ukraine, in order to assist Poland to detach the Ukraine from the U.S.S.R. He received and arranged for work for priests arriving from Poland for the purpose of espionage. He gave them financial support and procured much information of a political character for them. When anti-soviet agitators were leaving the U.S.S.R. for Poland, Skalsky issued them certificates of "reliability." In a word, like many of his predecessors and colleagues, Skalsky remained a citizen of the U.S.S.R., but carried on espionage in favour of Poland, and strove to weaken the soviet republic in the interests of the Polish bourgeoisie.

The work of the catholic priesthood in the U.S.S.R. is apparently so advantageous for fascist Poland that the catholic training colleges prepare special priests for work in the U.S.S.R. In the course of Skalsky's trial, it was ascertained that Dubovskoi, Bishop of Lutsk, had been sending groups of priests from Poland to the Ukraine, with a view first of all to espionage on their part, not religious work.

In the spring of 1929 a baptist espionage organisation was discovered in the Ukraine. The organisation was maintained by funds from abroad, and worked on behalf of Poland. It was headed by the baptists Shevchuk, Poplavsky, Kosolapov and others. The group engaged in smuggling, crossed the Polish frontier to receive religious and counter-revolutionary literature from Polish officers, and transported it for distribution in the territory of the U.S.S.R. In return, Shevchuk and Co. supplied the Polish intelligence department with information of all kinds, particularly about the distribution of units of the Red Army, military schools, etc. This trial established that some baptist preachers in the U.S.S.R. also were agents of the bourgeoisie.

In November, 1929, the State Political Department (G.P.U.) discovered in the Ukraine a counter-revolutionary organisation calling itself the "League for the Emancipation of the Ukraine," the object of which was to restore the capitalist system. Amongst the leaders of this organisation was V. Chekhovsky, the former prime minister of the Petlura government (Petlura was a bandit who for a time wielded considerable power in the Ukraine during the civil war) and now the leader of the Ukrainian "Autocephalic" church.

For its counter-revolutionary purposes, the "League" made considerable use of the Autocephalic church, in which former officers, members of Petlura's bands and white organisations, were given posts as bishops, parish priests, etc. It should be mentioned that not less than 70 per cent. of the leaders of the Ukrainian church served during the civil war in the armies of Petlura as colonels, lieutenants, etc. After the destruction of Petlura, these individuals exchanged their officer's uniform for a priest's cassock, but remained counter-revolutionaries and enemies of the soviet government. Naturally, they took an active part in the work of the "League," the purpose of which was to detach the Ukraine from the U.S.S.R. As socialist construction developed and the class struggle in the countryside became more intense, these counter-revolutionary elements became still more active. The extraordinary conference of the Ukrainian Autocephalic church at Kiev, in February, 1930, placed on record that the church "during its ten years' existence was a well-defined anti-soviet counter-revolutionary organisation" and that at the head of this church "those persons took their stand who had been defeated on the open political front and, in entering the church, were animated with the intention of utilising it as a weapon wherewith to continue the struggle against the soviet government."

There should be nothing surprising in the fact that in all these cases the priests involved in espionage or other anti-soviet activity were prosecuted on these charges. The cases quoted have not been invented. They were the subject of judicial examination in the presence of thousands, frequently of representatives of the foreign press. Many of the accused frankly admitted that they had carried on espionage in favour of Poland out of hatred to the soviet state.

This is not to say that all the catholic priests living in the U.S.S.R. are Polish spies. No. But there is a definite group among them whose political sympathies attract them strongly to Poland and against the U.S.S.R. And this group is not so very small.

Thus is it clear that the soviet government prosecutes only those priests whose criminal activity is very far from religious. Somehow we feel that if the British intelligence service had established that the Archbishop of Canterbury was a French spy, it would see that he was arrested immediately, in spite

of his high clerical dignity. For the same reason the soviet government arrests those who carry on espionage for capitalism. Can this be called "religious persecution"?

5. The Church Struggle Against Socialist Reconstruction.

The soviet government and the whole soviet country have set before themselves a gigantic task of economic and cultural reconstruction. The Five-Years' Plan now being applied involves colossal changes in the whole structure of the country. The Soviet Union must grow out of its industrial backwardness into a state which can take its place in the front rank of the advanced industrial countries of the world (advanced in the technical sense, not the social; here the Soviet Union has nothing to learn from the capitalist countries). In spite of the vast difficulties which spring from the isolation of the Soviet Union and the necessity of relying upon its own forces, the Five-Years' Plan can and will be carried out, thanks to the tremendous determination of the working class, which is overcoming every obstacle, and thanks also to the swing in the direction of collectivisation which has developed in the countryside. The fulfilment of the first year's estimates with a surplus have made it possible to consider as a practical issue the question of carrying out the Five-Years' Plan in four years.

Vast changes are taking place in the countryside. Millions of peasants are organising in collective farms. The mass movement for collective farming has gripped vast districts, regions and even republics. Thanks to this movement it has been possible to approach the question of wiping out the kulaks as a class—the last capitalist class in the Soviet Union—in the districts which have been completely reorganised on a collective basis. The successful movement into the collective farms is changing the face of the soviet countryside, and millions of the peasantry are becoming active builders of the socialist order of society. It is just this that terrifies the bourgeoisie of all countries (including the kulaks in the U.S.S.R.); and it is just this that explains why the campaign against the U.S.S.R. has broken out with especial force to-day, in the hope of hindering the fulfilment of the Five-Years' Plan and preventing the reorganisation of agriculture on a collective basis. It was for this purpose that the stories about "religious persecution" were set going.

The classes threatened by the construction of socialism—the capitalist elements in town and country—are making a stubborn resistance. They never give in without a struggle. They are having recourse to any and every means to maintain themselves and prevent the construction of socialism. In this struggle the rich peasants (kulaks) utilise the church and religion to the full. For in these the kulak has a tried and tested weapon for the battle against socialism. A few examples of this can be quoted.

In the town of Kazan, the Tartar mullahs taught the "faithful" in the mosques that God was against the collective farms, because the Koran stood like a rock for private property.

In various parts of the country, priests and baptist preachers quote texts from the Old and New Testaments to prove that God is against collective farms, and is definitely in favour of private property.

It is reported in the Urals that sermons have been preached there on the text that "everyone entering a collective farm crucifies Jesus on the cross again." In the districts where collective farming has made big strides, there have been many cases of an active alliance between the priests and the kulaks to fight it. When they fail to influence the peasants directly, they try to influence their wives. There have been cases in the Urals when priests have threatened the peasant women that they would not christen the children or bury the dead of those who entered the collective farm, and that the church would excommunicate them. In places they succeeded in influencing the more backward women to such an extent that the latter forced their husbands to leave the collective farms.

At one stage in the movement, the German Mennonite colonists also began organising collective farms. Their preachers immediately began a widespread campaign, forbidding them in God's name to enter these farms. In doing so, they were of course acting in the interests of the rich colonists, who exploited the poor peasantry and were afraid that the organisation of collective farms would completely destroy their economic influence. The Mennonite preachers, playing on religious and national prejudice, began a campaign for emigration from the U.S.S.R. The fact that one Mennonite group did emigrate was widely advertised throughout the world for anti-soviet purposes. But it soon turned out that the disappointed colonists were in a far worse position in their "dear fatherland." The German landlords refused to grant

them land, as might have been expected, epidemics broke out in their camps, and the Mennonite poor peasants who remained in the U.S.S.R. very soon realised what their preachers were aiming at. To-day, a number of Mennonite collective farms had been successfully organised in the Ukraine.

When ordinary agitation and sermons are of no avail, the priests have recourse to the wildest forms of religious trickery, arranging for "miracles" of every kind, "visions of the Virgin Mary, etc." In the Ukraine, Central Russia and other areas, the most marvellous and astounding reports have been in circulation, as for example: a peasant woman took a baby to the priest to be baptised. When the priest began the ceremony, it turned out that there was no baby, but a hatchet, in the swaddling clothes. The woman, runs the story, wrapped up the hatchet and took it home where, on unwrapping the clothes, she found the baby again. When she brought the child for the second time to be baptised, it turned into a piece of rope. The interpretation given to this story by the kulaks and priests is that either the rope or the hatchet await those who enter the collective farm. This idiotic story was invented and circulated by the priests and kulaks in the Rovno district of the Central "black earth" region, for the sole purpose of intimidating the peasants. In one of the districts of the Urals, the priests set going a rumour that a pillar of fire had appeared, which was burning to ashes members of the collective farm. In one of the villages of the Tartar Republic, the mullah, hearing that the peasants intended to organise a collective farm, called together the public and said: "Oh, ye faithful! The collective farms are against the Koran. I will tell you a case which took place in the Spassky canton, when they wanted to organise a collective farm in a Tartar village. Allah sent a hurricane and the village was destroyed." The threat of excommunication for entering a collective farm has been made in a number of places.

This detailed examination of the fight against collectivisation in the name of religion has been necessary because, at the present time, the growth of the collective farms is the most important feature in the life of the Soviet Union. But the priests utilise their influence in the struggle against every other measure of the soviet government which threatens the interests of the propertied and capitalist classes. Thus, the

church has opposed the various measures recommended to the peasantry by the soviet government with the object of improving the fertility of the soil; again, the priests have bitterly opposed the introduction of the continuous working week, which makes it possible for the workers' state to utilise the mechanical equipment of the factories to the utmost, and secure better results in industry. The priests have opposed socialist competition, sale of grain by the peasants to the state, the introduction of tractors, and so forth.

Every kind of cultural activity in town and country meets with the utmost possible opposition at the hands of the kulaks and the priests. Many cases of agitation against schools, cinematographs, theatres, newspapers, books, etc., by priests and dissenting preachers have been recorded. There have even been cases of schools being burned down at the instigation of the local priests. The evangelical and baptist leagues have forbidden their members to visit cinemas, theatres and clubs on pain of excommunication.

The soviet courts have had many cases before them of village wireless receivers being broken up at the instigation of the priests. A similar campaign has been carried on against soviet doctors, and when a small-pox epidemic broke out amongst the "Old Believers" in the Urals, they were influenced by their preachers to such a degree that they refused to accept vaccination, on the ground that it was the same as "being sealed to Antichrist." At the very time that the soviet state is spending vast sums in order to spread agricultural knowledge in the countryside, the baptist preachers and other priests are carrying on a violent propaganda against any attempt to increase fertility by scientific means. They declare that to sprinkle the fields with "holy" water will give better results than the sorting of seeds, artificial manures, etc.

In brief, it is no exaggeration to say that in every branch of economic and cultural activity, in all spheres of socialist reconstruction in the U.S.S.R., religion and the church appear on the scene as a hostile force. They are extensively used by the capitalist elements in town and country: nor is this surprising. Open propaganda against socialism would not arouse the sympathy even of the most backward sections of the workers in the Soviet Union. But the same energy put into the fight for "the defence of religion and religious

customs" still has some chance of being accepted by part of the workers, in the country at all events.

Obviously the soviet government cannot remain indifferent to this struggle against socialism under the flag of religion and under the leadership of the priests or rabbis. It prosecutes them as it would prosecute anyone, be he atheist, Christian or Jew.

Naturally, the priest in such cases always tries to represent himself as a "martyr of the faith." But this is merely a tactical move to win support, which should mislead no one. There is no persecution of religious belief, but there is punishment of those who, under the cover of religion, interfere with, and frequently fight against, the building of socialism.

SHERWOOD IS FULL OF IT!!!!!!

6. What Representatives of the Churches Say About Their Political Activities.

A number of facts have been quoted bearing on the counter-revolutionary political activity which has been going on in the U.S.S.R. in the name of religion, and illustrating the counter-revolutionary part played by the leaders of the various religious organisations. It is interesting to see what leading churchmen themselves say about their political activities. The late Patriarch Tikhon, whose authority was recognised even by the white prelates, and who served as a symbol of the counter-revolution for many years, issued an appeal to the faithful in 1923, in which he declared that his anti-revolutionary policy had been a mistake. Tikhon wrote:

"We recognise our offence before the soviet government, namely, our many passive and active anti-soviet activities, recounted in the charge laid against us in the Supreme Court, *i.e.*, resistance to the decree confiscating church valuables in aid of the famine victims, the proclamation of our anathema against the soviet government, our manifesto against the Brest Litovsk Treaty, etc. Fulfilling our duty as a Christian and Chief Shepherd, we make this confession and grieve for the victims of this anti-soviet policy. In reality it is not only we who were guilty, but also the surroundings in which we grew up and those malicious persons who prompted us to take these steps from the very beginning of the soviet government. As enemies of the latter, they strove to overthrow it through our church, for which purpose they sought to utilise me, as the head of the church. Being powerless to combat

the soviet power openly and directly, they wished to compass its destruction by roundabout means, through the church and her pastors."

We see that the Patriarch frankly recognised that the enemies of the soviet government strove to overthrow it by utilising the church.

The All-Russian Church Assembly in 1923 emphasised this point: "From the summer of 1917 onwards, the responsible leaders of the church took up a definitely counter-revolutionary attitude. 'The church must restore the unity of Imperial Russia' — this was the watchword for which the church began to work, closely bound up as it was before the revolution with Tsardom. . . . The Holy Assembly of the Russian Orthodox Church of 1923 condemned the counter-revolutionary struggle and its methods — the methods of enmity to mankind. In particular, the assembly of 1923 grieves that the soviet government and all its supporters should have been anathematised, and declares the anathema invalid . . . "

A group of Roman catholic priests of the Ukraine published a letter on November 5, 1927, in which they recognised the counter-revolutionary part which the catholic church had played. They stated:

"We have been guilty more than once of yielding to the temptation of political activity, frequently establishing relations with the agents of the Polish bourgeoisie and the Polish capitalist state. Anti-soviet influences which reached us from abroad frequently impelled us to continue in the path of treason. Part of the priesthood carried on an intolerable anti-soviet course of activity, assisting espionage, helping to smuggle people over the frontier into Poland, carrying on anti-soviet agitation, etc.

"Besides having legal means of contact with Poland and the Vatican at our disposal, part of the priesthood frequently used illegal means of communication through the Polish diplomatic representative. There were cases of imperialistic propaganda by priests in favour of Poland, even the pulpit being used by some priests for this purpose, as well as for anti-soviet agitation and severe criticism of laws and regulations of the soviet government. There were attempts to educate children in a spirit of Polish chauvinism, and to attract them away from the schools and educational institutions."

N. Tolstoy, the well-known catholic churchman already mentioned, who served 36 years as a priest, published a statement in the Kharkov press (February, 1929) as to the reasons of his renouncing the priesthood. He said:

"The Roman Catholic priesthood embodies all the hatred of the capitalist West to the Workers' Government and, instead of Christian love and tolerance, constantly engages in anti-soviet activity and propaganda, bringing up its followers in the same spirit."

Later he says: "Remaining a true son of religion, but being powerless to counteract this evil, and not wishing furthermore to countenance or support the anti-soviet policy of the priests, I break with them completely, renounce the calling of a priest of the catholic church and the rank of protopresbyter."

Thus we see that even many members of the priesthood are repelled by this bitter anti-soviet attitude of the church. Dozens of similar public statements by leaders and rank and file workers of all the churches, recognising the anti-soviet rôle of the priesthood and the church itself, admitting that religion had been used as a cover for political activity.

It is for these activities, and these only, that prosecutions have been initiated against priests by the soviet state. Obviously such prosecutions are not based, and never have been based, on the religious convictions of anyone.

7. What Russian Churchmen Say About the Church in the U.S.S.R.

What then is the actual position with regard to religious persecution in the U.S.S.R.? Is there really any ground for the rumours, or have they all been invented? Let us hear what representatives of the priesthood living in the U.S.S.R. have to say. They should know the true position better than British, Dutch and other clergy and capitalists.

On February 15, 1930, a statement on the position of the orthodox church in the U.S.S.R. was issued in reply to the anti-soviet campaign in "defence of religion." The statement was signed by the Metropolitan Sergius (acting Patriarch), Serafim, Metropolitan of Saratov, Alexei, Archbishop of Khutinsk, Pitirim, Bishop of Orekhovo Zuevo.

The journalist asked them: "Is there really any persecution of religion in the U.S.S.R., and what form does it take?"

They replied: "There has never been, nor is there, any persecution of religion in the U.S.S.R. In virtue of the decree separating the church from the state, all are free to observe whatever faith they will, and no religion is persecuted by the state. Furthermore, the decree of the Central Executive Committee and Council of People's Commissars of the R.S.F.S.R., adopted on April 8, 1929, which deals with religious organisations, completely eliminates even the smallest appearance of any persecution of religion."

They were asked whether it was true, as stated in the foreign press, that many cruelties had been inflicted by soviet officials on individual priests (*e.g., Morning Post* of December 20, 1929, and February 4, 1930). The churchmen replied: "In no way do these stories correspond to facts. They are all invention and slanders, unworthy of serious people's attention. Individual priests have been persecuted, not for religious activity, but on the charge of some anti-government action. Moreover, this naturally has taken the form, not of any persecution or cruelty, but of the procedure established by law."

Thus, the leaders of the Russian orthodox church declare that *there is no persecution of religon whatsoever in the U.S.S.R.* A further illustration may be quoted in the pastoral letter issued on August 8, 1927, over the signatures of two Metropolitans, five Archbishops and one Bishop. The letter contains the passage: "Let us publicly express our gratitude to the soviet government for such attention to the spiritual needs of the orthodox population." Thanks are not usually rendered for persecution.

The Jewish rabbis in all countries, as is well known, have joined in the anti-soviet campaign. They also "grieve and protest" against the non-existent "persecution" in the U.S.S.R. of religion in general and Judaism in particular. And here is what the rabbis living in the U.S.S.R. themselves say about the position of the Jews.

In 1928, thirty-one Jewish rabbis of White Russia published an open letter in the press on the subject of the resolutions of protest against the persecution of the Jewish religion which were at that time beginning to appear abroad, particularly in Poland. They said: "The Jews living in the U.S.S.R. have received complete and absolute equality. There is not a single government in the world which has

done as much for the Jewish people, persecuted for ages, as the soviet government." (We recommend this to the attention of Dr. Hertz, the British Chief Rabbi.)

In connection with the protest campaign in Poland, the rabbis write: "Appointed by our congregations to maintain the honour and purity of the Jewish religion, we protest against these declarations of the Polish rabbis."

Thus the Jewish rabbis also repudiate the stories spread in Europe and America about "soviet persecution of religion." When the workers' enemies in Poland, America and other countries, hostile to the U.S.S.R. attempted to explain away this statement by talk of "pressure" by the soviet government, the same rabbis published a second statement in December, 1928, in which they again protested against the tales of religious persecution and the groundless suspicions that "pressure" was being exercised on them, definitely declaring that "there can be no talk of any pressure on us."

A group of catholic priests in Podolia—Narvsky, Svidersky, Kvasnevsky, Gansky, Yosukas, Kobetz, Adelberg—published a statement in the press on November 5, 1927, repudiating the espionage in favour of Poland carried on by the catholic priesthood in the U.S.S.R. After quoting many instances, they write: "The soviet government has given us complete independence and freedom for catholic activity. The dark era of oppression has disappeared without a trace, together with the Tsardom which maintained it, and the star of liberty has begun to shine with its bright radiance on the life of the catholic church"

Further on they say that the catholic church in the Soviet Union enjoys "complete freedom of religious belief, guaranteed by the Constitution of the U.S.S.R."

What a far cry from these words of the catholics actually in the U.S.S.R. to the slanderous inventions of the Pope of Rome!

We have quoted a number of extracts from documents of the orthodox, catholic, baptist, Jewish and Buddhist churches. All of them repudiate the far from novel story about religious persecution in the Soviet Union. All of them emphasise that the leaders of the anti-soviet campaign are animated by political interests and not by concern for religion. Who better knows the true state of affairs: the priests who pour

forth their venom against the working class state in the columns of the *Morning Post* or through their tame M.P.'s in the House of Commons, or those priests who live and work in the U.S.S.R.?

8. Why the Church Fights the Building of Socialism.

"Why then," the reader may ask, "this hatred of the church towards the soviet government, towards socialist reconstruction?" Let us quote again a very important passage in the statement of the Orthodox Churchmen on February 15, 1930.

"We have to state frankly," they say, "that the misfortune of the Church is that in the past, as everyone knows perfectly well, it was too closely connected with the monarchical system. . . Even up to this day some of our brothers cannot understand that there will be no return to the past, and continue to act as political opponents of the soviet state."

This is quite true and explains the anti-soviet tendency of the church described above in brief outline. The orthodox church in Russia under the Tsardom was a state church, the Tsar himself was reckoned its head. The Tsar's government appointed the leaders of the church, and that same Russian white guard, the Metropolitan Antonius Krapovitsky, who is now crying out about "soviet persecution of religion," on one occasion at a meeting of the controlling body of the Russian orthodox church (the Holy Synod), when discussing the appointment of an archimandrite to office, said: "Tsarskoye want him to be a Bishop. Well, if Tsarskoye desired it we would appoint a black swine to the Bishopric." Tsarskoye referred to Tsarskoye Selo, the residence of Nicholas II. The archimandrite in question was a certain Barnabas, the nominee of the notorious Rasputin. This incident is described by the Russian Metropolitan, Alexander Vvedensky, in his book: *Church and State* (Moscow, 1923, p. 14).

This cynical declaration by one of the leaders of the church was true enough in one respect—that the imperial clique had the church under their thumb, and individuals like Rasputin decided its fate. Historically, the Russian Church was the most faithful lackey of Tsarism. It was precisely with the help of the church and of religion that the Tsarist despotism maintained its yoke over dozens of millions

of the Russian peasants. When it was necessary the leading churchmen, like the Moscow Metropolitan, Philaret, in the middle of the last century, justified the serfdom of the peasants by referring to the so-called "Holy Writ."

The church taught that the Tsar was "God's anointed," drew portraits of the Tsars on their holy ikons, proclaimed the princes of old to be "saints," and thus brought up the people to bow down to the Tsars as appointed by God.

The Tsardom transformed the whole vast army of church officials into a kind of spiritual police, which, by a decree of 1716, repeatedly issued thereafter, had instructions to inform the authorities of all anti-government activities which came to their knowledge through the confessional. The priests in fact were imperial officials. Many received their wages from the imperial treasury, and preached obedience and loyalty to the Tsar, love of the landlords and capitalists, and renunciation of any revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Tsarist system.

The church carried on a most active struggle against the revolutionary movement. The pulpits were nothing else but political platforms. The church organised bands of hooligans and Black Hundreds to fight the revolutionary working class movement, and set up printing presses in the monasteries to print leaflets openly inciting to commit pogroms (the Troitse-Sergievsky and Pochaevsky Monasteries were particularly renowned in this respect). For its faithful service to Tsardom, the church received colossal privileges, and its priests money, rewards and decorations. The holy synod received £5 million a year from the state budget. The Russian church was a great landowner, and by the middle of the eighteenth century owned about a million serfs. In 1905 the orthodox church, together with the monasteries, owned about 7 million acres of land. The income of the Moscow Metropolitan before the revolution was £8,000 a year, and that of the Metropolitan of Nizhni-Novgorod about £31,000 a year.

Closely linked up with Tsardom and capitalism, the church was extremely hostile to any revolutionary movement. In 1905, during the first Russian revolution, it organised the first black hundreds to break up the working class movement. During the peasant uprisings in that year, the monks of the Glinsky Monastery, Kursk province, organised an

armed detachment to crush the peasant movement. The head of the church counter-revolutionary movement at that time was no other than the Metropolitan Antonius, at that time Bishop of Volhynia, who is now so active in attacking the U.S.S.R.

An example of the spirit animating the Church at that time is the following quotation from No. 4 of the *Pochaevskye Izvestia* for 1907, published by the monastery above mentioned: "About 500 democrats have been arrested in St. Petersburg during the last three days. It is a good thing that the police are arresting worthless persons. It would be still better if they were hanged as often as possible."

The church, not only the orthodox but all other varieties, met the November Revolution of 1917 in very hostile fashion. The General Assembly of the orthodox church of 1917-18 was an active organiser of the countr-revolutionary forces.

On the eve of the November Revolution, the Assembly placed all its hopes on General Kornilov, and sent him an ikon to bless his attempts for a military *coup d'état*. When the working class seized power in spite of the conspiracy of the generals and the bourgeoisie, the church assembly turned all its hatred against the soviet government. Patriarch Tikhon, who was elected at this assembly, sent out an appeal on January 9, 1918, calling on the faithful to rise against the soviet government.

In his letter Tikhon cursed the soviet government, and called on the faithful, in the name of God, to have nothing to do with it. At the church assembly many leading churchmen declared that the salvation of Russia was only to be found in the restoration of the Tsar and therefore everything must be done to fight the revolution. The assembly described the decree separating church and state as "the device of Satan," and called on the faithful to "suffer for Christ's cause," *i.e.*, for the privileges and income of the priests.

During the civil war, the workers of the Soviet Union saw many representatives of the church in the ranks of their enemies and as commanders of punitive detachments. In 1919, when peasants' revolts took place in the rear of Kolchak's army in Siberia, a priest, Vitaly Boginsky organised a punitive detachment, which hanged, murdered and outraged. Boginsky was in charge throughout, and received a cross from Kolchak in reward for his services. Other priests

assisted Denikin, Wrangel and all the other bandits, great and small, who fought the workers' and peasants' republic.

Thus the working class and the millions of working peasants have always seen in the church a relentless foe, in the church officials the loyal servants of autocracy, in religion a reliable weapon of the exploiters to confuse the minds of the workers and incite them against the revolution.

The church became an organic part of the autocracy and the rule of the capitalists and landlords. This cannot be changed: it prevails until this very day. The state of affairs shows itself in all the attempts of the priests and religious organisations to fight socialist construction, and in the use made of religion by white guards of every kind.

The church remains of course hostile to socialism in the era of vast reconstruction, just as it was in the days of Tsardom and during the years of civil war.

9. Religious Fanaticism.

In December, 1929, there took place at Saratov the trial of the sect of Skoptsi. The Skoptsi were a religious sect which existed long before the revolution, who practised castration of men and mutilation of women. Converts were promised every kind of blessing, including a share in the property of the sect, in return for submission to mutilation. The leaders of the Skoptsi were prosecuted on this charge. It should be noted that they were all well-to-do persons. Thus Yevdokimov possessed 8 cows, 3 horses, 2 colts, 3 sheep, 2 calves and other property. Shevyrev possessed 7 cows, 2 horses, 2 colts, 3 sheep. This made it all the more possible for them to make converts by promising material rewards.

On January 13, 1930, another trial of Skoptsi took place at Leningrad. The leadership of the organisation turned out to be entirely in the hands of former merchants and millionaires. Thus, one leader, Lomonosov, had a banking house before the revolution with a turnover of millions, while after the revolution he owned a large store. Another active official was a trader before the revolution and fought on the side of the whites during the civil war. A third, Alexeyev, owned an exchange office before the revolution, and in addition a large jewellery shop. The other leaders were also rich men before the revolution. The leaders of the organisation were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. The trial

brought out the fact that the Skoptsi carried on not merely fanatical but also political work, on the principle that the soviet government was displeasing to God and that only the Tsardom would please the Lord. Their monarchical sympathies could be quite understood when we recall their origin.

At the end of 1929, a fanatical religious organisation was discovered in Moscow, which was controlled by Dimitry Schultz, a teacher of foreign languages, and his brother Heinrich. It transpired that as long ago as 1921 Schultz began to organise "spiritualist seances" at his house, to which he invited his young pupils, and there recruited them into his fanatical organisation. He taught that he was the "last prophet" and drew up a new religious "doctrine" based on extracts from the Koran, the Old and the New Testaments. Schultz assured his followers that during the services he "was changed into a woman.' In order to impose upon them, as he confessed at the trial, he organised, with the help of his wife, and by means of special appliances, "flights" of the furniture in his rooms, the "materialisation of spirits," etc. He introduced into his "religious services" several corporal ordeals, assuring his followers that this was necessary to strengthen their spirit: first, beating with rods, then flogging with straps, and finally, the burning of crosses on their bodies with red-hot irons. He organised drunken orgies, followed by disgusting scenes of debauchery. Schultz at these moment represented himself to be a woman, for which purpose he put on women's clothes, declaring that he had been "transfigured." The impudence of this prophet was so great that during the last five years he had not done a stroke of work, living entirely on his followers. When they had no money to give him, he sent them to beg for alms.

Throughout all this activity, Schultz regularly carried on a political anti-soviet campaign, forbidding his followers to read the soviet papers and ordering those who worked in soviet institutions not to do their work properly. When sending them on to the streets to beg on his behalf, he used to say that the more beggars there were on the streets, the worse it would be for the soviet government, etc.

Three examples have been quoted of prosecutions of religious organisations. Will the Archbishop of Canterbury tell us that these represent "persecution of religious convictions"? Perhaps he is of the opinion that the soviet government should freely permit the fanatical Skoptsi to carry out

their savage rites? Perhaps the Conservative M.P.'s consider that the soviet government should have tolerated the vicious fanaticism of Schultz, the "last of the prophets"? In that case, Mr. Baldwin can put down yet another question to Henderson in the House of Commons: "Is the Right Honourable gentleman aware that the sect of Skoptsi are not permitted to carry out the rite of castration; and that this is a restriction of their religious freedom; and does His Majesty's Government propose to take any steps to ensure that the Soviet Government grants the necessary freedom to the Skoptsi to fulfil their religious obligations?"

10. The Atheist Movement in the U.S.S.R.

The greatest possible fury has been aroused abroad by the "League of Militant Atheists," which has existed for over five years in the U.S.S.R., and at present numbers over two million members. All kinds of rubbish are written abroad about this organisation. In his appeal the pope accuses it of being responsible for the downfall of "morality and culture."

The League of Atheists is a voluntary organisation, totally independent of the soviet government and devoid of any administrative power whatsoever. Its rules have been submitted for confirmation by the state in exactly the same way as those of all other organisations. Having no administrative authority, *the League of Atheists does not close and has no power to close any churches, or in any other way to infringe the laws guaranteeing freedom of conscience.* Any member of this organisation who interfered with the religious freedom of anyone would be prosecuted and dealt with according to law, as for any other breach of the peace.

The League of Militant Atheists has as its object to fight religion as a reactionary force, and as a force which interferes with socialist construction. But in its work the league relies entirely upon methods of agitation and propaganda, methods of persuasion, explanation and mass organisation. The league itself has declared against any struggle with religion by administrative methods. The manifesto of the Second Congress of Atheists of the Soviet Union (July, 1929) declares: "We are a voluntary society, we bind no one, we force no one to be atheists." Further on, the manifesto states that the league fights religion by "stubborn and patient agitation, propaganda and mass organisation."

Recent years in the U.S.S.R. have witnessed a mass abandonment of religion by the workers, due to the successful construction of socialism. The workers of the U.S.S.R. are becoming convinced that they can build a better life without a belief in the supernatural, and they are building it. In the process of the struggle for a new world, they are becoming convinced that religion and the church are the weapons of their class enemies in the latter's fight against socialism. They will become convinced still more, as a result of the anti-soviet campaign of the churchmen now being carried on in all countries, that religion is a means whereby war is being prepared to overthrow the soviet state and prevent the building of socialism. All these facts hasten the abandonment of religion by the workers of the U.S.S.R.

This abandonment shows itself in the demands of millions of workers for the closing of local churches and the utilisation of their premises for cultural and social requirements. Often nearly the whole population of a village or district votes for the closing of a church. Must the authorities resist this and order the people to attend church? It should be borne in mind that, according to the law, a church may be closed at the request of the workers, not by the local authorities, but only with the sanction of the higher bodies, and the final decision is reserved for the Executives of regional and national conferences of soviets. A group of churchgoers always has the right to appeal against the decision.

The following fact shows that the closing down of churches really takes place at the demand of literally millions of workers. During the soviet election campaign in Moscow, in March, 1929, hundreds of thousands of electors in the factories and workshops included in their instructions to their deputies the demand that the Moscow churches be closed down and utilised for cultural purposes. The mere list of election meetings which passed such resolutions makes a large book of 168 pages. This is evidence of the fact that churches are closed only on the demand of the masses (except in individual cases when, as in all countries, churches have to be pulled down, together with other buildings, in the interests of town planning, widening of streets, etc.).

The London *Times* of January 31, 1930, printed two photographs showing the breaking down of a church in the Simonevsky Monastery (this district is a working class area in the city of Moscow). The text under the photographs

spoke of "Soviet vandalism." The *Times* said nothing about the fact that the workers had been demanding that this church be pulled down, and a workers' Palace of Culture built in its place, for the last three years. The workers of the largest engineering shops in the Soviet Union—the "Amo," "Dynamo," "Parostroi" and others in this area—had been demanding the destruction of the church, which was in the very middle of the suburb. The Tsarist government and the Russian capitalists had never bothered to construct a club for the workers in this working class area. There was no more convenient space to build a workers' palace of culture in the whole district. The church had long ago been closed for lack of a congregation, and had been utilised as a museum. For three years the workers had been pressing for its destruction. Only after a special delegation of workers had been sent to the soviet government itself, asking for permission to pull down the church and build a palace of culture in its stead, was permission granted. A hundred thousand workmen from the Moscow factories volunteered to take part in the "Subbotnik" (a day of free and voluntary labour) organised for the purpose of pulling down the church, but only 10,000 received permission to take part in the work, as more could not have been utilised to advantage. As a result, the workers' palace of culture in a purely working class area of Moscow will be built.

Thus we see even from this example that it is far from easy to get permission to close down churches. Where it is granted, this is only as a result of the genuine wishes of the majority of the people. In order to explode the fantastic stories which are being circulated by the *Morning Post, Daily Mail* and other lying journals, it is sufficient to mention that, out of over 50,000 churches which existed in Russia at the beginning of the revolution, only 3,500 in all have been closed for any reason whatsoever.

With regard to the utilisation of the churches closed down, the following figures are interesting. Monasteries and houses attached to churches which have been closed since the revolution have been transformed into 48 sanatoria, 168 public welfare institutions (home for permanently disabled, homes for aged persons, orphanages, etc.), 197 schools, 349 medical institutions, 2 lying-in hospitals for poor peasant women, etc. The churches themselves which have been closed have been adapted for use as clubs, schools, hospitals, reading rooms,

museums, workers' universities, polytechnics, sports clubs, libraries, etc. If the soviet government did not carry out the wishes of the workers in this respect, it would be *breaking* the law of liberty of conscience and imposing on the population something they do not want.

Let us take another example. In a number of towns and villages, the workers carry the ikons (holy images) out of their houses and burn them in public. Is it persecution of religion, when a man takes out of his own house an ikon which belongs to him and burns it in the street? Perhaps the editor of the *Morning Post* considers that the soviet government ought to have done what his lamented friend, Nicholas Romanov, would have done—namely, send a detachment of soldiers to prevent it?

Yet a further example. In many towns and villages the workers and peasants are now demanding the prohibition of the ringing of church bells and demanding that the church bells be utilised for industrial purposes. In the town of Yaroslavl over 90 per cent. of the electors demanded that the local soviet should put an end to the ringing of church bells. It is clear that the soviet of Yaroslavl could not but carry out this decision of the absolute majority of the population. As a result, church bells are no longer heard at Yaroslavl and in a number of other towns. This should not be surprising to people in Western Europe and America, where church bells in many places are also unknown, and no one considers this religious persecution.*

Yes, there is a tremendous emancipation of the masses from religion going on in the Soviet Union. But this is not being achieved by persecution. Persecution would only strengthen religion. And this is just what the capitalists and churchmen of all countries are afraid of. They are terrified of the victory of socialism in the U.S.S.R., they are terrified by the growing atheist movement; and that is why they are organising their "world crusade" against the Soviet Union.

* Tsar Peter I., in 1700 issued a decree that the bells be taken off all churches and brought to Moscow to be recast into guns. At that time not a single country (England included) thought this "persecution of religion" or organised a "crusade" against Russia. There have been many other cases in Russian history when the priests themselves handed over their bells to the Imperial Government for its military needs, as in the war of 1914-18. But, when the working class becomes master of its country, and melts down bells into machinery and tractors, capitalist Europe organises a "crusade" against the U.S.S.R. on the plea of "religious persecution."

11. Fight the Slanderers and Warmakers.

From the foregoing the reader can see that the stories of persecution of religion in the U.S.S.R. are mere inventions. What then is their purpose? Who is interested in these attacks on the Soviet Union? Who is it that is attempting to inflame the passions of the people as a preparation for new war? Who is it who is inspiring the crusade against the Soviet Union?

They are to be found in every country, and their names are various. But they are all inspired by the same bitter hatred and fear of socialism, and by the greedy class outlook of robbers accustomed to steal on a large scale who see their opportunities diminishing. In order to distract attention from themselves, as usual, they shout: "Stop thief!"

The campaign was begun by the British conservatives. What are they after? The same as they fought for in 1918, 1919 and 1920, when they were supporting the Russian whites, setting fire to factories and blowing up workshops, sending their soldiers, tanks and destroyers against the young soviet republic. In those years they spent £100,000,000 in the vain hope of overthrowing the soviet government: and they do not despair yet.

What is their aim? To throttle the soviet state; to make a colony of the Soviet Union: to lay their hands on soviet oil (hence their interest in the Caucasus; hence Sir Henry Deterding's concern for the "defence of God"): to get back the factories which used to belong to British capitalists before the revolution: to make workers' Russia pay the Tsar's debts. Much the same ideas inspire the imperialists in every country.

Torn by their internal difficulties and differences amongst themselves, shaken by the growing wave of unemployment and the economic crisis, the imperialists hope to divert the growing anger of the workers of their countries away from their own misery and unemployment into a war against the U.S.S.R. Furthermore, they are directly interested in the destruction of a country which is building socialism, and thereby providing a practical object-lesson for the oppressed and exploited in every country of how to deal with those who sit on their backs.

The campaign against "soviet persecution of religion" is a campaign for war. The imperialists are very little concerned for religion: it is the workers' state building socialism

that they are fighting. No act of provocation is too base if it helps them to achieve their object. But the workers' sympathy with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is so great that the bare cry for war against the U.S.S.R. would find no response amongst the masses of the people.

Hence the lies and slanders with which the imperialists mask their true aims.

Who are their closest assistants? The Russian whites, expelled from Russia by the October revolution, which deprived them of their land, factories, property and luxurious existence. What are they after? The overthrow of the soviet government, the restoration of Tsardom, the return of the factories to the capitalists and the land to the landlords.

The campaign begun by the British conservatives has been taken up by the capitalist priests in every country. There are Jixes and Baldwins everywhere who hate the U.S.S.R. The priests of every religion have joined forces with them, because they cannot remain indifferent to the order of their masters. The Pope of Rome and the Archbishop of Canterbury, apart from their common hatred of socialism, have their own particular interest at stake. The Metropolitan Sergius pointed out in his interview of February 15th the "the pope has long dreamed of subjecting our church to catholicism." This is the explanation of the pope's activity. As long ago as 1923, Patriarch Tikhon pointed out that "the Pope of Rome is using every possible means to propagate catholicism in the Russian orthodox church." One of the means to-day is to pose as the defender of "orthodoxy."

On the other hand, the British clergy have since the November Revolution established close relations with the orthodox bishops expelled from Russia. Their common interest in fighting the workers and peasants found reflection in a discovery, somewhat late in the day, that there was very little difference in principle between the Church of England and the Russian orthodox church. Russian bishops have participated in British church ceremonies, and vice versa. Obviously, the Archbishop of Canterbury could not pass unchallenged the bid of the rival firm of Rome for the goodwill of the Russian capitalists and priests. Hence, the tremendous mobilisation of the Church of England officials in defence of "persecuted religion."

It should not be forgotten, in this connection, that the Church of England has material interests at stake no less than those of the Russian Church. According to the latest figures, the Church of England and the three churches in Scotland collected in contributions in 1925 well over £10,000,000: this apart from the huge landed estates of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, on which are situated some of the worst slums known anywhere in the world, but which nevertheless bring in a huge income, on which thousands of lazy parsons are maintained as parasites. Thus it is natural that the Archbishop of Canterbury and his underlings should seize any and every opportunity of fighting the workers 'revolution in Russia, with its "dangerous" example for the British workers.

During the first years of the November Revolution, no less idiotic and wicked falsehoods were spread throughout the world than the present tale about "religious persecution." Take the story about the "nationalisation of women." Who spread this story? The very same people who are now shouting loudest about religious persecution. In February and March of 1919, a commission was set up in the United States, under the presidency of Senator Overman, to "investigate the true situation in Soviet Russia." In reality, the Commission was set up by American imperialism to manufacture lies about Russia which might serve to justify Allied intervention. The commission took evidence from a number of white refugees, who were definitely interested in the overthrow of the soviet government, and distributed their inventions as "the truth about Bolshevik Russia."

At the meeting of the Commission on February 12th, 1919. A. Simons, a Methodist clergyman, gave evidence. He stated: "You will find their programme in the Communist Manifesto by Marx and Engels. Before our departure from Petrograd, if the reports in the press are to be believed, they had already laid down very definite principles regulating the so-called socialisation of women: every woman from 18 to 45 had to appear at the Commissariat, where she, whether she liked it or not, was handed over to the man with whom she had to live henceforth."

Exactly the same story was set going in the same year in Great Britain, and in the same way. Lloyd George set up a commission to investigate the "truth" about Russia.

and the result was a Parliamentary Paper, containing the most outrageous collection of lies which even Lloyd George has ever made himself responsible for. In this document can be found a telegram from the Rev. B. S. Lombard, a clergyman of the Church of England, to Lord Curzon, stating: "When I left Russia last October, the nationalisation of women was regarded as an accomplished fact, though I cannot prove that (with the exception of Saratoff) there was any actual proclamation issued." (*Collection of Reports on Bolshevism in Russia,* Parliamentary Paper, Russia. No. 1, 4.4.1919.)

Here is an example of a deliberate and foul lie spread throughout the world by the imperialists and their clerical servants, with the object of arousing hatred against Soviet Russia amongst the mass of the people. Simons and Lombard were lying deliberately, Senator Overman and Lloyd George were lying when they pretended to believe the story, which was even worse. Both the American and British Government knew perfectly well that the stories of "nationalisation of women" were inventions. At the beginning of 1919 the American government sent an official mission, headed by Bullitt, to negotiate with the soviet government on the subject of peace. Bullitt presented a written report of his journey to President Wilson and to Lloyd George, in addition spending a whole morning with the latter describing his stay in Soviet Russia and his conversation with Lenin.

His report contained the following passage: "Prostitutes have disappeared from sight, the economic reasons for their career having ceased to exist. . . I have never heard more genuinely mirthful laughter than when I told Lenin, Tchitcherin and Litvinov that much of the world believed that women had been 'nationalised.' This lie is so wildly fantastic that they will not even take the trouble to deny it. Respect for womanhood was never greater than in Russian to-day." (Report, p. 59.)

It is interesting to contrast the two reports. The minister Simons speaks to the public, in order to incite them against Soviet Russia, and therefore invents the lie about "nationalisation of women." Bullitt makes a secret report for the American president, who requires the true facts, and Bullitt exposes the story as an invention. But the American government did nothing to expose the lie, because it served its purpose.

In 1919 Kolchak's "Supreme Church Council" sent a message signed by Archbishop Sylvester and others to all the churches of the world, on the subject of "bolshevik horrors." The message declared that the bolsheviks were "violating nuns and nationalising women." In reply, the Archbishop of Canterbury sent the following message (retranslated): "The severe persecutions and great suffering now being experienced by the Russian Church and described in your telegram to me, cause me inexpressible grief. The pastors and flock, in whose name you appeal to me, may rest assured that we shall spare no effort to impress upon our fellow-countrymen a clear understanding of all the horrors you are undergoing, and will zealously co-operate in every measure of assistance which the Allied Governments consider feasible."

Thus, the Archbishop supported intervention by endorsing the white liars in 1919, and ten years later his successor faithfully continues the same policy.

But to-day, in the thirteenth year of the existence of the Soviet Republic, there are few who will be taken in by talk about the "nationalisation of women." That is why the warmakers are utilising a no less foul invention about "religious persecution." Any lie, any piece of provocation, any outrage is permissible, in the eyes of holy fathers, when directed against the U.S.S.R. For they have such a low opinion of the intelligence of their own workers that they are certain that the working class will swallow anything that is told about the Russian revolution. It must not be forgotten that the very same Archbishop of Canterbury, in his New Year's message on January 1st, 1930, called on the workers to accept lower wages, work longer hours, and work harder in the interests of "trade," *i.e.*, in the interests of the capitalists who own that trade. If the archbishop thought that the workers would be impressed by such an appeal, it is not surprising that he should imagine they will accept anything without question. The workers will show that he is wrong.

DON'T BE TAKEN IN BY LIES ABOUT "RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION"!

DON'T LET THE REVEREND LIARS TRAP YOU INTO WAR!

FIGHT THE IMPERIALISTS WHO ARE OUT TO SMASH THE WORKERS' REPUBLIC!

HELP THE WORKERS OF THE SOVIET UNION TO CARRY OUT THE FIVE-YEARS' PLAN!

SMASH THE CAPITALIST ATTACK ON THE FIRST SOCIALIST STATE!

STAND BY THE SOVIET UNION!

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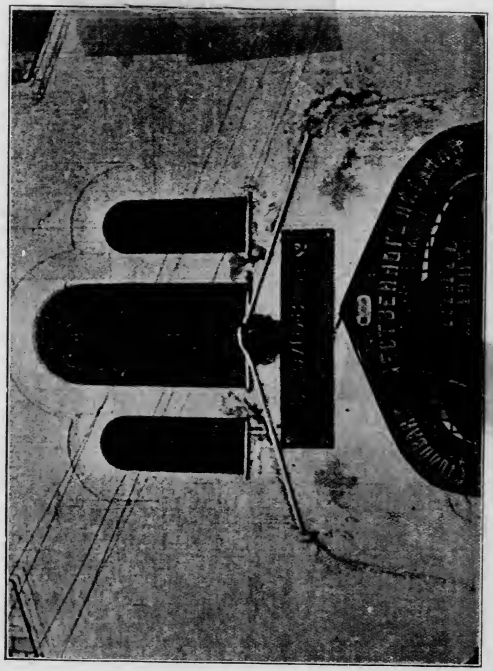

Church converted into a communal dining room. The picture on the cover shows peasants praying for rain in time of drought.

INTENTIONAL SECOND EXPOSURE

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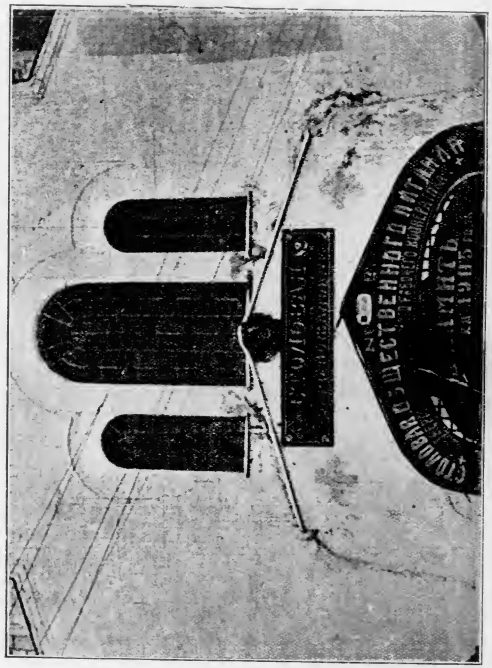

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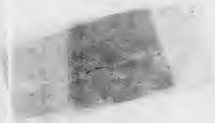

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